

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
2/16/2022**

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT FLAGSHIP PRODUCING THEATRES
IN SUPPORT OF ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM FUNDING**

On behalf of the Connecticut Flagship Producing Theatres (“CFPT”) which include Goodspeed Musicals, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center, Westport County Playhouse and Yale Repertory Theatre, we are submitting testimony today in support of funding for arts, culture and tourism. We first want to start by saying thank you to the members of the Appropriations Committee as well as your colleagues in the legislature who continue to recognize and support us.

The CFPT was formed in 2014. Our theaters, like many others across the state continue to feel the profound impact of COVID-19 on our business, employees, and the community around us.

We testify today to update you on the continuing struggle facing our theaters because of the pandemic and the extended shutdown of our venues. We respectfully request that the committee restore additional funding to our theaters. Please note that the Flagship Producing Theaters line item remains unchanged for the last several years at level, \$259,950.

For performing arts organizations, 2020 was certainly difficult but close to impossible might be more accurate. We sincerely appreciate the support from the Lamont Administration and the General Assembly. Additionally, we also are grateful to Commissioner David Lehman and Arts Director Elizabeth Shapiro for hearing and responding to our call for help. DECD provided funding toward the end of 2020 with support from the federal CARES Act.

My colleagues and I have said, and we have heard you say, that this 2020 funding was not the end of a process of support for the arts in our state but rather the beginning.

We strongly believe the economic, social and educational benefits we bring to the state make a compelling case for increased funding.

Also, the Governor's midterm budget proposal put forth last week recommends continuing free admission to museums, aquariums and other venues. We respectfully ask the Appropriations Committee to expand this DECD program in 2022 and 2023 to add theaters to the list of arts venues that allow free summer admission. This could be either to theater productions or the array of summer youth programs that we offer. As you all know, theater productions such as those offered by the CFPT provide a valuable and rich experience for the residents of our state.

Finally, the Governor's midterm budget also provides an additional \$4.5M for summer enrichment programs through the State Department of Education. Again, we respectfully request to also be added to these programs which reached 93,000 students statewide last summer. Our programs provide tremendous education value to those who attend.

Unlike many of the performing arts centers with which you may be familiar, the Flagship Producing Theatres, each of which is a non-profit organization, create theater from scratch, right here in Connecticut, annually infusing the state with \$42 million in economic activity.

Collectively:

- We create more than 1,488 jobs for artists and administrators right here in Connecticut
- We spend just under \$24 million in taxable payrolls
- We purchase local materials in excess of \$12.4 million

- We spend nearly \$2.3 million on local printing and advertising and over \$1.3 million on hotel nights and apartment rentals for guest artist housing
- We attract nearly 328,000 regular patrons
- The return on the State's investment is consistently over 400%

In a recent economic impact study conducted by the Americans for the Arts, the direct economic impact of all the arts in Connecticut in 2010 was \$455 million. Approximately 10% of that total spending comes from our six flagship producing theatres, which serve residents from all over the state and attract thousands of patrons from outside of the state.

Beyond our *economic* impact we also have an essential *community* impact. Each of our organizations has partnerships with schools and local organizations, offering a vast array of programs ranging from student matinees to library discussions on inclusivity to training teachers and young theatre professionals. Collectively, we serve over 40,000 students of all ages throughout the state.

Finally, our organizations continuously receive national recognition which enhances Connecticut's reputation across the country. In 2014, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* premiered on Broadway and won four Tony Awards, including Best Musical. Productions at our theatres have collectively won nearly 100 national awards, including 5 Tony Awards for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Our reputations across the field remain well-known.

Many times over the years, our organizations have received national recognition which enhance Connecticut's reputation. Most recently, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* won four Tony Awards, including Best Musical. This show premiered at Hartford Stage Company. Connecticut was also represented in New York with *The Realistic Joneses*, which premiered at Yale Rep, and Long Wharf's production of *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. Our

productions have collectively won nearly 100 national awards, including 5 Tony Awards for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

Thank you for your time and we urge you to continue to support our theaters and the value they bring to the state.